



To the members of the Labor Committee:

Raised HB 5279 AN ACT ELIMINATING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE EXCEPTION FOR CERTAIN CITIZENS OF CONNECTICUT is a highly controversial issue being debated across the country.

While the Arc of Meriden-Wallingford fully supports "real wages for real work" (which is a theme many of our advocates are pushing for, and rightly so), there are just as many if not more individuals who will be adversely effected if this bill is enacted for every person with a disability regardless of the amount of work they can perform.

To give you some history, in the past individuals with disabilities were unable to work in the real workplace. This was due to the fact that they could not perform the whole job, could not work at the pace of the other workers and/or could not meet the expected quality outcome.

The sub-minimum wage law was put into place to assess a person's ability to work, taking into account

- how the work is performed by the "regular workers"
- the average pay for the job
- the time it takes a person with a disability to perform a job
- the quality of the work they perform compared to the norm

Once these components are assessed through a time study process, a wage is set base on the standard wage (sometimes higher than the minimum wage) and the individual is then paid for the amount of work they produce. For example, if they perform 50% of the work in one hour (50% of the work that is done by the standard worker), they are paid 50% of the wage.

This sub-minimum wage law allowed individuals who were never previously permitted to enter the workforce to work proudly alongside their peers. Should the present sub-minimum law be revoked, many individuals currently working under the certificate in real jobs would have to be paid minimum wage. This would cause many employers to pay disabled workers twice the amount to complete the same amount of work their non-disabled workers complete. This would dissuade employers from using workers with disabilities unless they could perform the entire job.

Now I know that doesn't sound like a big issue, however, Arc of Meriden-Wallingford has 107 people in employment, 42 of which are paid less than minimum wage under the sub-minimum wage certificate.

Should the law go into effect, these 42 people would lose their jobs. Community employers would decline to partner with our company since it would not be cost effective.

That is 42 people that are proud to earn a paycheck, proud to work and be contributing members of their community. Forty two people devastated and most likely in need additional services to cope with depression and anger issues. While we are just one agency, some agencies have hundreds of people under sub-minimum wage certificates.

I strongly suggest that monitoring or enforcement of the certificate be conducted for those who should be paid minimum wage and that the certificate stay intact for those who cannot work up to those standards (no matter how much blood sweat and tears they devote to it). And believe me the individuals I have met diagnosed with intellectual disabilities are the most committed, determined and genuine individuals I have ever met in my life. I implore you to carefully consider your vote on this issue and know who and how each person will be affected. If this law is enacted, I think you will find there will be more casualties than successes.

I am happy to speak further on this critical issue. I will be at the hearing today at the capital. I am available to meet with you at your convenience. I am encouraging the individuals who will be negatively affected to come and speak. I also implore you to visit the individuals in their jobs, see the pride and the commitment they have, and not take away the little opportunities they have to work and live among their peers.

Sincerely

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